

**Four very true stories from**

***The Rivers of Hades***

**PART II**

**by Adrian Şinca**

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### **Prologue**

"The Rivers of Hades were born out of necessity; the book is the result of the countless years that I spent in various psychiatric hospitals and clinics, the result of direct observation of the daily life and structure of the hospital, of the patients as well as of the treatment during hospitalization and post-hospitalization. The idea of crossing the rivers of Hades represents the break between the two worlds, the world in which we live and the separate world in which those who are affected by mental illnesses live. Being a book based on reality, it was necessary to make some changes to protect the identity of patients and medical staff." Adrian Şinca

### **Cerasela**

An unusual atmosphere festered through the hospital. The closest equivocation I could conjure up is that of the buzzing of bees discovering a mouse at the entry of their honeycomb.

The reason for the commotion was the admission of a new patient, Cerasela, a 29-year-old female... But what had made her instantly become the mouse inside the hive?

Cerasela was part of a privileged, adored family, descended from the Olympian mount only to reside amongst mortals, plebeians, a third-hand actress who had conquered the winding alleys of Hollywood. She couldn't clearly discern between life in the Hospice and life in Hollywood.

Two years earlier she had been offered the lead role in a remake of Sophocles' tragedy in which she played Jocasta, mother to Oedipus. To celebrate her receiving the role, Cerasela participated in a large-scale party where, like in Olympus, rivers of alcohol and "heavenly manna" in the form of cocaine flowed. On this occasion, she gave free rein to her base carnal mandate in a fertility ritual with seven fauns. She woke up three days later in her apartment, naked, stretched out on the cement of the bathroom, lovingly hugging the toilet. Three days of recovery followed and the filming began.

After three months, feeling worryingly strange, she decided to go for a medical check-up. Unfortunately for her, the doctor confirmed the fear in her heart,

namely that she was pregnant. Not the least of her problems was that she couldn't pinpoint which of the seven fauns was responsible for her predicament. Filming continued for a few months despite the "gravity" of the situation, luckily Cerasela's constitution prevented her from divulging that she was pregnant for another good few months.

In fact, she tried to hide her pregnancy from the whole world up until the moment she gave birth. Overnight, Cerasela was encumbered by her newborn, who was constantly famished. Three or four months followed, characterized by a total lack of sleep, during which time she began to have various hallucinations, which she attributed to drug use before pregnancy. In the following days after the birth and, when she had already started to breastfeed, the medical staff did not notice the signs that indicated a postnatal psychosis, a fact that would later have fatal consequences.

One day, whilst nursing her son on the terrace of a hotel, Cerasela imagined that she was holding a huge fat snake in her arms that were sucking her breast, she panicked and freed her arms from the snake, when in reality she had thrown her baby from the ninth floor. This was the preamble that guided Cerasela's steps into our psychiatric hospital which was to ensure her accommodation for an indefinite number of years, the judge's decision placing an effective barrier between Cerasela and the spotlight. The defense attorney provided by Hollywood intended to plead postpartum psychosis to spare her from the Caudine forks of a long prison term.

At the same time, we found ourselves on the front page of the can-can newspapers and realized that the number of reporters lined up on the lawn in front of the building far exceeded the cumulative number of staff and patients on the premises.

On this occasion, the guards finally discovered the reason why they were cashing in their cheques every two weeks. Mayhem ensued and a trench war was waged amongst the guards and reporters, akin to the one described by Homer in the suitors' invasion of Penelope's house in the 'Odyssey'.

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*'Penelope and the Suitors'* by John William Waterhouse (1912). Oil on canvas, 129.8 x 188 cm (51.1 x 74 in). City of Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums Collection



### **The Hammer Drill**

One day the air conditioner broke down. Two craftsmen come and start to work, one of them left the drill on the cement. The hammer drill was powered by an electric battery and had a drill attached. A patient grabbed the drill and started drilling a hole in his head. Luckily, a member of staff and another patient stopped him in time.

In my opinion, this proves that human nature often takes precedence even over reason. Regardless of how many training sessions are offered to the staff, the habit leads to the ignoring of precautionary measures, ultimately having disastrous results that are usually blamed on "bad luck". There's still something wrong with hospitals.

### **An army song**

The truth is that we weren't sane either...

To relieve the tension, an idea came to me to reinvent a song learned in the army and adapt it to our situation. And I also taught it to the patients.

We are ugly and we are mean"

Moreover, we are full of Thorazine...

Am I right or wrong?

Are we going strong?

Hell no, hell no!"

Whoever sang the song received two cigarettes and a spoonful of Ness coffee. The nasty thing was that someone ratted me out to the administration and I was suspended for three days.

## **Two "White Things": the Cadillac and the Woman**

Perhaps I should mention Mortimer. He was hired as an orderly and had been working in the hospital for thirty years, a muscular, black African with beautiful features, and a small mustache that resembled Hitler's.

Mortimer had joined the army and was active in the reserve army. As such, he received a handsome pension from the army, showed up to work in a camouflage uniform, and drove a huge white Cadillac Eldorado with a red leather interior. In fact, he said he only likes two "white things": Cadillac and women.

He always wore glasses with black lenses, although I suspected that he didn't need them, he couldn't stand me being there even if I gave him thirty glasses of water... The whole mess started when a rumor began spreading that I was gay. It seems that during that period, I "accidentally" slept with one of the sisters with whom he also had a relationship, as he would come, he also rang his bells with determination... please...

Mortimer was already past retirement age, but it seems he was in no rush to retire given his extramarital affair.

Honestly, I couldn't say I was filled with joy when Mortimer popped into my head, no matter how rarely it happened.

Mortimer was a tough guy, even brutal, he moved in at night when it was rumored that he had started a new relationship with a night nurse.

Entering the salon one morning, I learn that the previous night a patient had hit Mortimer on the head with a large radio set. Mortimer, who was sleeping peacefully in an armchair bed, received the radio directly in his head, because of this "accident" he was transported to the intensive care unit and died a few days later. What did they use the two large pensions for... I'm paraphrasing a proverb: "after our horse runs away, we can put ten locks on the stable door".

